

Grant System for Improvement of Traditional Vacant House in Rural Areas -Case Study in Kagoshima Prefecture-

Sachiko YAMAMOTO, Mahito NAKAZONO
Perceptual Science and Design Engineering, Faculty of Engineering,
Yamaguchi University, Ube, Japan
h014hn@yamaguchi-u.ac.jp

Abstract

Recently local governments have started on the project of making use of vacant house as the residence for the parson turned from city to country. At present, the vacant house use project is classified into three type systems. In this paper, the "Information service plus improvement subsidy" system is discussed as the main subject. The purpose of this study is to analyze the availability of the system that is the advanced type of the "Information service" system. The object areas of investigation are Togo-cho and Ei-cho in Kagoshima Prefecture. From the viewpoint of system, repaired item, improvement cost and life style are analyzed and the characteristics of the system are clarified. And the system is compared with the similar system. At the end, the subject of the system is examined. As the result, the effective project form is proposed to solve the subject of present system. Firstly, the improvement cost paid by the government and owner should be collected. Secondly, owner should get house rent. Thirdly, tenant should pay a part of the improvement cost. This system will have effect on not only making use of vacant houses but also revitalizing rural areas.

Key words: rural village, vacant house, system, conservation, repair, subsidy, life style.

1. Introduction

1.1. Background and purpose of study

Recently, the intention of country life has got strong, and the people who want to turn from city to country are increasing. From this background, the vacant house use project has been started to make use of vacant houses as residence for these people by local governments in rural areas.

Figure1 shows three types of vacant house use system. The "Information service" type that local government gives information and agency service to the people who want to turn from city to country is most general. Lately, the "Information service plus improvement subsidy" type that local government gives information service and subsidy for repair is on the increase. More over, the "Rental by Municipal Corporation plus improvement subsidy" type that the local government rents a vacant house in the constant period, and after the repair with subsidy from foundation, it is used as rental residence is grappled in Shimane Prefecture only.

In this paper, the "Information service plus improvement subsidy" system is discussed as the main subject. It is the developing system of the "Information service" system including the support of repair. The purpose of this study is to clarify the composition, characteristics and problem of the system and to indicate the subject for improving the system.

1.2. Method of study

Firstly, the data of local governments grappling the "Information service plus improvement subsidy" system

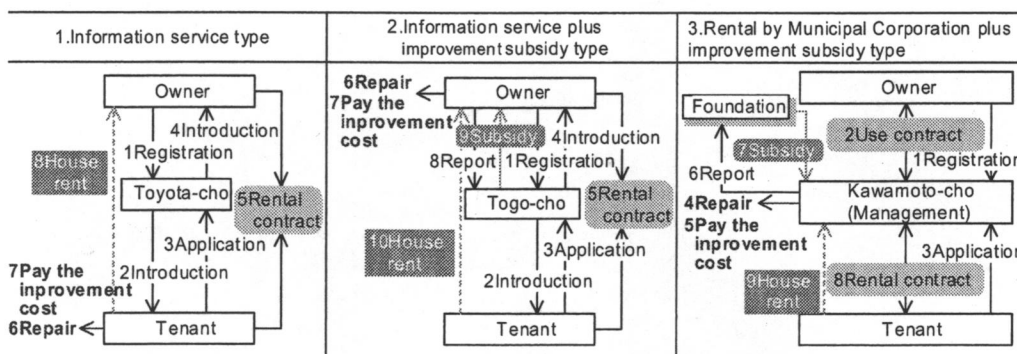


Figure1 System Flow-Chart of Three Types

is collected by communication network. Table 1 shows seven interviewed local governments that have a lot of achievements at the present time. Secondly, Togo-cho and Ei-cho in Kagoshima Prefecture are selected as the survey area (Figure2) and 6 residences that renovated vacant house are the objects for investigation (Table 2).

Thirdly, the improvement subsidy, the repaired contents and life style are analyzed. And the composition and characteristics of the system are summarized. Finally, the system is compared with the similar system and the subject of the “Information service plus improvement subsidy” system is indicated.



Figure2 Survey Area

2. The vacant house use project by local foundation

Local governments grappling with “Information service plus improvement subsidy” system are rare in Japan. After the vacant house use project had been started, some governments had finished the project in a few years. The factors are as follows. Firstly, the repair cost is a burden to the government. Secondly, the owner of vacant house has negative view about the rent of own house. Thirdly, the expensive repair cost must be necessary, because some of the vacant houses are dilapidated, but the budget for repair is little, so it is difficult to repair the vacant houses completely.

Next, the projects of two local governments are adopted as case study; components and characteristics of the “Information service plus improvement subsidy” system are explained.

2.1. Contents of subsidy system

The main contents of local governments grappling with “Information service plus improvement subsidy” system are as follows (Table 1). The subsidy is within 1/2 or 1/3 of total improvement cost and the upper limit per house is nearly 500,000 yen. Moreover, some of the governments pay 100,000 yen to the owner who rent own vacant house as subsidy. The residence that was paid the subsidy has to be rented to new comers for fixed term as a

Table 1 Local Governments Enforcing the Project

Local Government	Subsidy	Project Term	Contract term (years)	Achievements
Kagoshima Prefecture	Togo-cho Within 1/2 of total improvement cost, The upper limit is 500,000 yen 100,000 yen is paid for persons who rent own vacant house	1999-2003	5	9
				5
	Ei-cho Within 1/2 of total improvement cost, The upper limit is 250,000 yen (500,000 yen was upper limit of subsidy till 2002) 100,000 yen is paid for persons who rent own vacant house	1999-	7	16
				0
	Naze-shi 10,000 yen/m ² , The upper limit is 1,000,000 yen	1999-2003	3	4
Ohkuchi-shi Within 1/3 of total improvement cost, The upper limit is 1,000,000 yen	1997-2002	10	13	
Ohita Prefecture	Kunimi-cho Within 1/2 of total improvement cost, The upper limit is 500,000 yen 100,000 yen is paid for persons who rent own vacant house	1992-	10	5
				6
Hiroshima Prefecture	Fukutomi-cho 500,000 yen is paid for persons who buy a vacant house which has floor space above 70 m ²	1998-	5	1
Wakayama Prefecture	Misato-cho 100,000 yen is paid for persons who rent own vacant house	2001-2004	3	6

Table 2 Outline for the Case Study House

Case	Local government	Structure	Story	Floor Space(m ²)	Life Time of House (year)	The Number of People
1	Togo-cho	Wooden	One-story	89	40	3
2		Wooden	One-story	82	100	5
3		Wooden	One-story	97	18	2
4		Wooden	One-story	106	38	6
5	Ei-cho	Wooden	One-story	60	60	4
6		Wooden	One-story	48	50	2

rule. The contract term is 3-5 years or 10 years. Kagoshima Prefecture has the most achievements, and it shows that the "Information service plus improvement subsidy" system is grappled actively in Kagoshima Prefecture. In the next paragraph, the system in Kagoshima Prefecture is analyzed by making the case study on the improvement of vacant houses.

2.2. Subsidy system of Togo-cho

Since 1993, Togo-cho has started the "Furusatozukuri promotion project" against the depopulation. The content of this project is the improvement subsidy of the vacant house and residential development for settlers. At the beginning, the government developed housing complex, and sold in lots or built house for sale. But the residences for newcomer weren't enough, because many people wanted to live in the town beyond the government's expectation. So Togo-cho has started the vacant house use project since 1999, and there are 14 achievements now.

Figure 3 shows the system flow-chart of Togo-cho. The detail of the system is as follows. Firstly, public information advertises a public contribution of vacant house, and the government makes a list. Secondly, Togo-cho introduces owner's contact address to a person who wants to rent a vacant house, and owner makes the rental contract with tenant. Thirdly, the repair is done including tenant's wishes, and it is general that owner pays the improvement cost. Next, tenant reports the result of repair to Togo-cho, and the subsidy is paid to owner. The object of the project is vacant house that is repaired and rented to local people or new comers within a year. The residence that was paid the subsidy has to be rented to new comers for five years. The subsidy is within 1/2 of total improvement cost and the upper limit is 500,000 yen.

During the contract term of five years, the improvement cost which local government paid can be collected by house rent during 1-3 years, after that, owner can get house rent with the exception of case 2 that owner must rent for seven years to collect the improvement cost.

2.3. Subsidy system of Ei-cho

Since 1999, Ei-cho has started the "Vacant house use project" to make use of vacant houses. There are 16 achievements now. Moreover, Ei-cho pays 100,000 yen

to owner who rent vacant house that can use without repair, but there is no achievement now. The systems flow-chart of Ei-cho is similar to Togo-cho but the list of vacant houses isn't made. If a person inquires about the vacant house information, the government may introduce the real estate agent.

The subsidy is paid if owner repairs own house and rents it for more than 7 years to following persons: he is sure to settle in Ei-cho, he is less than 50 years old and he has his spouse or children who are less than 22 years old. The subsidy is within 1/2 of total improvement cost and the upper limit is 250,000 yen. There wasn't age limit of settler and 500,000 yen was the upper limit of subsidy till 2002. But the qualification of settler has been limited and the subsidy has been cut down too from 2003, because the government's budget had become insufficient to the application. From the above, the services of government are only to introduce a tenant and pay the subsidy to owner. If it will become necessary to repair the house again by disaster, owner will consult with tenant about the cost.

Table 3 shows that the improvement cost of Ei-cho is about 700,000 yen (Case 5,6). If the house rent is expensive, owner can get the house rent above 2500,000 yen during the contract term (Case 5).

3. Case study on the improvement of vacant house

Table 4 shows resident profiles and the motive for move of six residences and settlers. Three cases are newly married couple, and the others are family. One is the case that tenant turned from city to country (Case 2) and the others are cases that tenant moved in same prefecture (Case 1,3-6). In conclusion, vacant houses are used as residence for local young families in many cases. In next paragraph, the improvement contents of residence and life style of settler are analyzed.

3.1. Case 1

Owner and carpenter decided the repaired parts, so tenant's wishes to repair parts weren't asked. Owner wasn't worried about the estimate and the parts that should be improved were repaired. Mainly, roof tiles and

outer wall of east side was changed newly. About the repair of the facilities, toilet bowl was exchanged newly. About the interior, *tatami* mat, *shoji* screen and *fusuma* (Japanese sliding door) of all rooms were changed newly (Figure4-6).

Floor plan is the center corridor type and bedroom of couple and child's room are secured. Living room is used for entertainment, relaxation and meal. Because of the shortage of *Oshiire*(Japanese-style closet), *Zashiki*(tatami room) is used for storage. Floor finish of all rooms is *tatami*, so tenant wants rooms of flooring board in future.

There is no window on the east side of the house. When *fusuma* between *zashiki* and *tsuginoma*(continuous *tatami*-rooms) is opened, these rooms are well ventilated and can get enough sunshine. On the other side, it is hot in kitchen and living room because these rooms are exposed to afternoon sunshine in summer. But it is very cold in winter.

3.2. Case 3

This case is that tenant paid the improvement cost and the minimum repair was done in order to reduce the cost. Kitchen sink was exchanged newly and an installation of solar heating system was set up in bathroom. Because there are four children, closet space is not enough. Therefore wood floor was laid in *doma*(earth floor) and the room is used for storage space. Family had to pass through the kitchen and change their socks when they moved to bathroom. So a passage made by wood panel was put (Figure7-9).

Floor plan is *Tanoji* (continuous four *tatami*-rooms) and bedroom of couple and children's room are secured. *Tatami* is laid on *engawa* (wood finish space outside of *tatami* room) as study space for children. *Tsuginoma* is used for entertainment, relaxation and meal. Because there isn't passage, a room of wood finish floor is used as

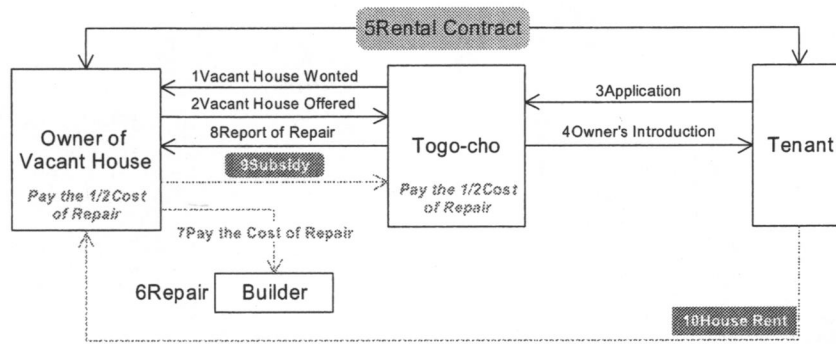


Figure3 System of Togo-cho

Table 3 List of Repaired Houses

Case	Contract Term (years)	House Rent (10 ³ yen)	The Cost of Repair (10 ⁴ yen)				The Term for Collecting the Improvement Cost Paid by Owner	Revenue of House Rent of Owner*
			Sum	Grant	The Cost Paid By Owner	The Cost Paid By Tenant		
1	5	3.0	171	50.0	121.0		3years and 5months	59
2	5	1.0	134	50.0	84.0		7years	-24
3	Undecided	5.0	79	39.5	39.5		8months	260
4	Undecided	0.6	40	20.0		20.0	2years and 10months	16
5	7	3.5	70	35.0	35.0		10months	259
6	7	1.0	66	33.0	16.5	16.5	1year and 5months	67.5

*Revenue of house rent of owner during the contract term - The improvement cost

Table 4 Resident Profile and Motive for the Move

Case	Household (age)	Job	Former Address	Former House	Motive for the Move
1	M32 F27 CF5	Self-employed	Kagoshima Prefecture	Condominium	They got married and wife's parents' home is near from this house, so they moved into it.
2	F41 CF17 CF13 CF11 CM4	Pert-timer	Aichi Prefecture	Condominium	She wanted country life and turned from city to Togo-cho where her mother has been there.
3	M32 F31 CM8 CF7 CF5 CF0	Agriculture	Kagoshima Prefecture	Leasehold	Because husband was transferred to Togo-cho, his family moved into this house.
4	M30 F29	Official	Kagoshima Prefecture	Leasehold	After they got married, they moved into Togo-cho where the middle between husband's workplace and wife's workspace.
5	M48 F39 CF16 CF13	Office Worker	Kagoshima Prefecture	Own House	Because husband was transferred to Ei-cho, his family moved into this house.
6	M36 F30	Office Worker	Kagoshima Prefecture	Own House	After they got married, they moved into this house.

hall and wardrobe space. Tenant wants to repair toilet in the future. Regarding the residence environment, it is cool in summer but damp because of paddy fields beside the house, and, cold in winter.



Figure 4 Exterior of Case 1

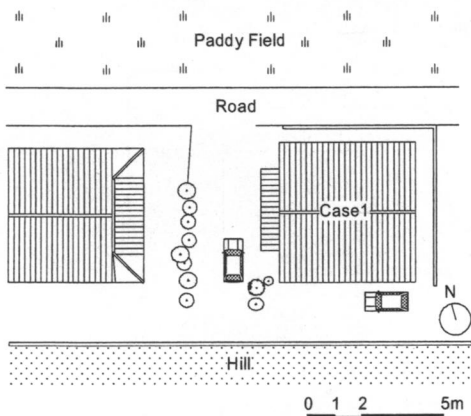


Figure 5 Site Plan of Case 1

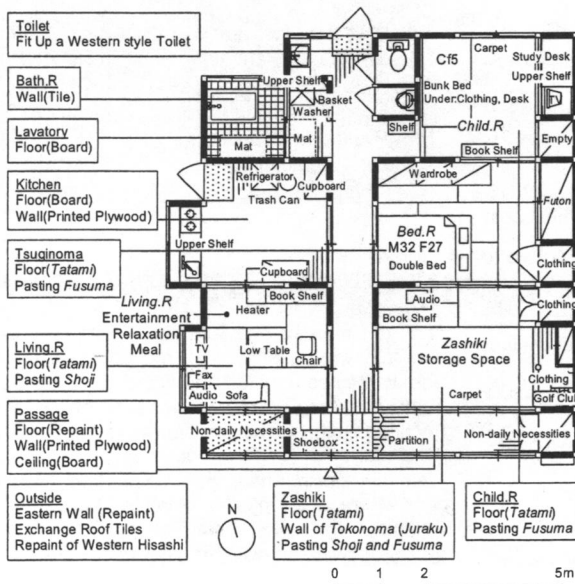


Figure 6 Repaired Part and Life Style of Case 1

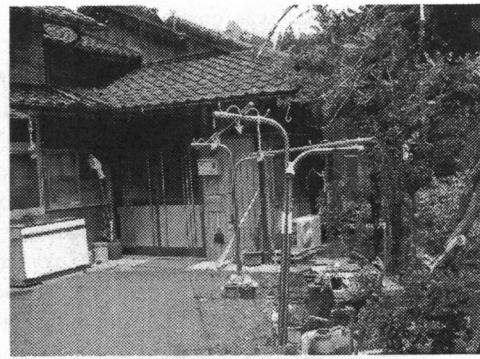


Figure 7 Exterior of Case 3

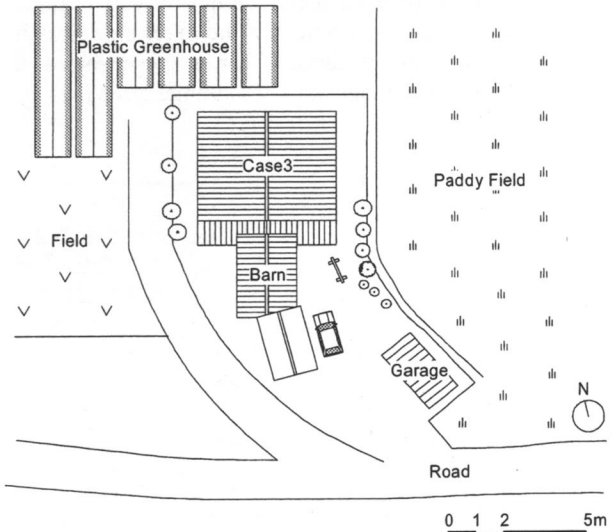


Figure 8 Site Plan of Case 3

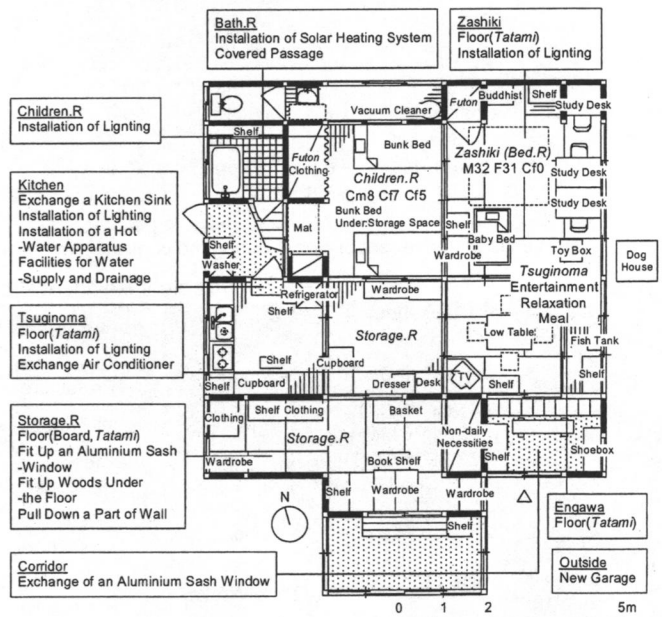


Figure 9 Repaired Part and Life Style of Case 3

3.3. Case 5

Owner decided repair parts, so tenant's wishes weren't asked. Tenant's space and owner's space were partitioned off in order to put owner's furniture in storage and the west side of house has been rent. Because the house had been vacant for only one year, large-scale repair wasn't necessary. Mainly, floor and wall was changed newly. About the repair of the facilities, toilet was changed newly (Figure7-9).

Engawa is used for children's room and *tsuginoma* is used for couple's bedroom. Living room is used for entertainment, relaxation and meal. But visitors must cross *tsuginoma* and bedroom when he goes to toilet. Because there are not enough closets, wardrobes are put on each room. Present toilet of lower treatment smells, therefore tenant wants to change it.

In addition, there is no window on the east and west side of the house, so this house isn't airy and can't get enough sunshine, and living and storage space are insufficient for the family.

4. Conclusion

4.1. Summary

This paper dealt with "Information service plus improvement subsidy" type of vacant house use system. The composition of the system, repaired items and life style were analyzed. The results are as follows.

- 1) The cost paid by local government can't be collected. So if local government has no budget, this system won't be realized or the subsidy will become less.
- 2) The cost paid by owner can be collected by house rent and owner can get house rent.
- 3) In case that owner has improvement budget more than 1000,000 yen, not only interior but also roof can be repaired (Case 1-2). On the other side, in case that owner or tenant don't have improvement budget, the improvement cost is about 700,000 yen and the main repair part is interior. So there are cases that tenant wants to repair facilities (Case 3-6).

4.2. Consideration

Feature of the "Information service plus improvement subsidy" system is that owner can get house rent after owner has collected the improvement cost by house rent.

Next, the "Rental by municipal corporation plus improvement subsidy" system of Nishinoshima-cho in Shimane Prefecture is featured as similar system to the "Information service plus improvement subsidy" system and these two systems are compared.

- 1) Subsidy system of Nishinoshima-cho

Figure13 shows the system flow chart of Nishinoshima-cho. After the choice of favorite vacant house by the applicant, the government makes a rental



Figure10 Exterior of Case5

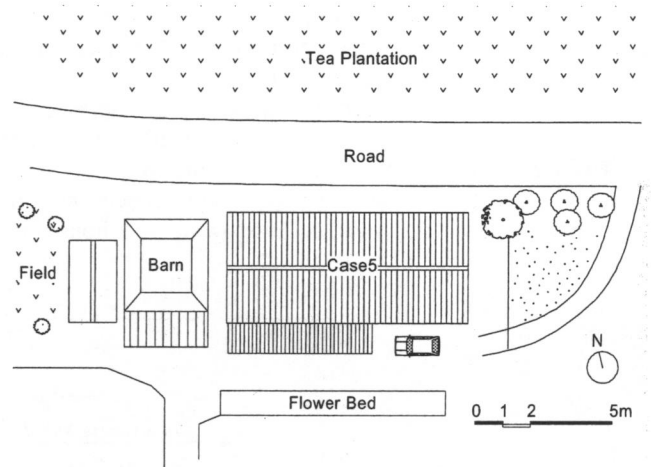


Figure11 Site Plan of Case5

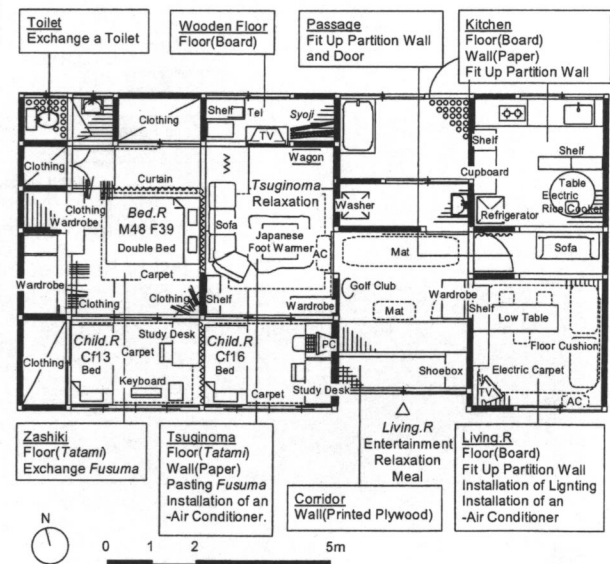


Figure12 Repaired Part and Life Style of Case5

contract with owner. The repair is made with tenant's wishes by the government. 1,500,000 yen is the upper limit price of improvement cost per house as the rule of government. If the cost becomes over, tenant must pay the surplus of the cost. The government reports the result of repair and the subsidy is paid to the government by the Foundation¹⁾. The government pays the 1/3 price of improvement cost and owner pays 1/6 price of one. The government makes a rental contract with tenant and tenant pays house rent to owner. The improvement cost which local government paid can be collected by house rent during three years.

Table 5 shows the outline of repaired residences. The investment of repair cost that the government pays is 500,000 yen. Though owner must pay 250,000 yen for the improvement, owner can get over 1,000,000 yen within ten years.

2) The view of the "Information service plus improvement subsidy" system

Subsidy of the "Information service plus improvement subsidy" system is 500,000 yen and it's same with Nishinoshima-cho. In case of Nishinoshima-cho, the improvement cost paid by local government can be collected during 1-2 years, because owner pays house rent

to local government. The improvement cost paid by owner can be also collected securely and more over, owner can get house rent. If tenant pays a part of improvement cost, tenant can repair satisfactorily.

From the above, the subjects of the "Information service plus improvement subsidy" system are as follows: the improvement cost paid by the government and owner should be collected, owner should get house rent and tenant had better pay a part of the improvement cost.

From these results, the future view of this system is cleared, and it is expected that vacant house will be made use of more and more, and farm village will be active.

Footnotes

1) 2,500,000 yen (in case of island areas, the limit is 3,000,000 yen.) was the upper limit of subsidy per house as a rule till 2003. But the rule has changed in 2004, and 1,500,000 yen (in case of island areas, the limit is 2,000,000 yen.) is the upper limit per house now. In this paper, the investigation was done by the achievement of the former, so subsidy is explained as 2,500,000 yen.

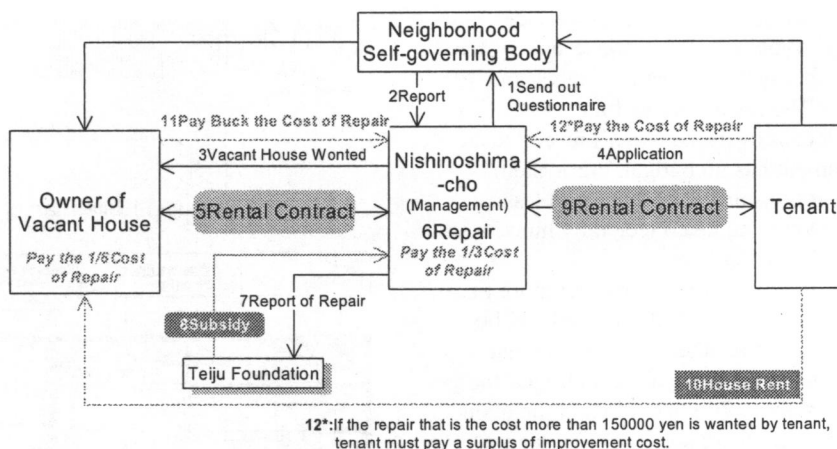


Figure13 System of Nishinoshima-cho

Table 5 List of Repaired Houses by Nishonoshima System

Case	Contract Term (years)	The Cost of Repair (10 ⁴ Yen)					House Rent (10 ³ Yen)	Revenue of House Rent During Ten Years (10 ⁴ Yen)		Revenue and Expenditure (*2- *1)(10 ⁴ Yen)
		Sum	Subsidy by foundation	*1The Cost Paid By Local Government	The Cost Paid By Owner	The Cost Paid By Tenant		*2Local Government	Owner	
7	10	400	75	50	25	250.0	20.0	50	165	
8		250	75	50	25	100.0	20.0	50	165	
9		170	75	50	25	20.0	15.0	50	105	
10		167	75	50	25	17.0	20.0	50	165	
11		153	75	50	25	2.6	25.0	50	225	
12		128	64	43	21		20.0	43	176	

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